

The Adventure

Henry Bryan Binns

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Rochelle S Townsend
with greetings for
Harry Bryan Binns

The Adventure

By the Same Writer

| | |
|------------------------------|------|
| The Great Companions | 1908 |
| The Wanderer and other Poems | 1910 |
| A Life of Walt Whitman | 1905 |
| Abraham Lincoln | 1907 |

The Adventure

A Romantic Variation on a Homeric Theme

Henry Bryan Binns

“Notre épisode de Kirké, au pays de Féronia la libératrice,
est, avant tout, l’Affranchissement.” - - *Victor Bérard.*

London: 1911: A.C. Fifield: 13 Clifford's Inn

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TO
DUNCAN MACDOUGALL
IN TOKEN OF
HOPE AND WORK
SHARED TOGETHER

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Circe

I tell of Her that is the mystery
Whose name none knoweth. Circe was She called
Long syne, and still the old name beckons Her,
Till, at its hail, shines, as through sea-water
With a wavering brightness, her bewildering smile.
She is the mystery on whose vague sea
Life sinks, thought perishes, the will lets go
In a last gasp of bubbles all its breath.
She is the mystery, voyaging on whose vastness,
Man's thought yet farther ranges, till his will
Unfurls the eagle-wings of Liberty.
The provocation, the supreme occasion
For the adventure of his faith, is She.

Note

Circe's song of Man the Piper was suggested by Mr. G. R. S. Mead's rendering, in his *Thrice Greatest Hermes*, of a passage from Hippolytus: and the design for Circe's weaving in Act III by the reproduction of a lekythos at Berlin, in Miss Harrison's *Myths of the Odyssey*.

Argument

Returning after the fall of Troy to his remote Ithaca, ULYSSES incurs the curse of the sea-god, so that he is thwarted in his homeward course. In his wanderings he comes at length to CIRCE'S sacred Island, somewhere in the heart of the sea. Here, after being proved by the enchantress, he sets forth again with new heart on his journey. Resolute of purpose, and assisted by a certain divine humour, he seems now about to win, as the first-fruits of his intercourse with Circe, some fresh freedom for the Race.

The Scene of the Play is a remote volcanic island in the central seas, known to travellers as the Isle Perilous.

The Persons of the Play are :

Circe, Lady of the Isle Perilous and priestess of an ancient shrine therein :

Her Four Maidens—Euryale, Pyrrha, Harpalyce, and Syrinx—the occult powers of air, fire, earth, and water, here taking visible shape :

A witch and Circe's panther :

Ulysses, a wanderer in quest of Freedom :

His Cousin, Eurylochus, who is captain over a party detached for exploration from Ulysses' company :

His Herald, Lieutenant, Piper, Wine-Carrier, and others of the party :

Moly, a young mermaiden, and an oak-haunting oracle, Axor :

The remaining Companions of Ulysses.

Acts I to IV take place in the afternoon and evening ;
Act V on the morning after.

The Adventure

Act I

The Enchanted Woods

A shaded plat of green before a pool. Behind it, on the left, rises a rocky slope—a great gnarled ilex (Axor's Oak) overhanging, its roots in the crevices. The woods thicken on the left. Descending through them, runs a path which crosses the plat, and proceeds, on the right, to traverse the sun-flooded marsh-lands, toward a mountain promontory which plunges into the violet sea. The pool is an artificial basin, fed from a mouth-piece in the rock above, under which is a shelf from which the water splashes; a wide marble rim runs about it.

It is a sultry afternoon: heavy white, towering clouds hang in a copper-coloured sky.

Two of Circe's Four Maidens, lightly clad in silver-spangled grey and gold-spangled smoke-grey, their skirts killed to their knees, are at the pool with their pitchers: Euryale, bare-footed on the green, propped on her elbows; Pyrrha, bathing her arms luxuriously as she sits on the edge of the pool.

The Adventure

When the Third and Fourth Maidens, Harpalyce and Syrinx, enter, they are in similar garb, green-grey and blue-grey, and carry respectively a bundle of sticks and a basket of fishes.

1st Maiden :

Slow-footed, backward-turning as they go,
Expectant, and reluctant and delaying,
Morning and noon and now the afternoon
Lag going over.

2nd Maiden :

Mischief is afoot ;
Through the hot stillness stealing, it draws nigh :
Each hour is yet more conscious than the last
How close it draws ; and yet there is no sign.

1st Maiden :

Ere Circe came, singing her Eastern songs,
These ominous days that come like meteors
From who knows whence, or wherefore, save it be
Portending change—were strangers to our isle.
Into the calm procession of our years
She brought another movement, mastering
Unto her restless soul the elements,
And we, the Maidens of the elements,
Made her our Lady. This is Circe's weather.

2nd Maiden :

And foreign to us still—and still a stranger ;
Its alien lips speak not, nor leaf nor bird
Hath any word of it :—the hour is mum.

1st Maiden :

But here is news that comes a-running !
(*Enter simultaneously on right and left the Third and Fourth Maidens.*)

The Enchanted Woods

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Nay,

How eager must you be whose feet defy
This heavy, sullen, and reluctant hour !

4th Maiden :

I have brought the sea-spoil up as Circe bade.
(*She drops the fish she was carrying in a basket on her head,
and comes to the pool side.*)

1st Maiden :

Have you no news ?

4th Maiden :

Sister, my lips are dry
And will not utter it !

(*The First Maiden gives her a draught from her pitcher.*)

2nd Maiden :

Harpalyce,
You too have gathered somewhere in the woods
Tidings that load your brow ?

3rd Maiden :

O cruel, cruel !
The wood is full of wrath ! At midnight, here
By this our pool, under the sacred oak
Whose over-stretching presence might not save him,
My dusky one o' the woods, pool-eyed, oak-antlered,
King of the creatures of the enchanted forest—
How can I tell it ?—murdered, dragged away,
O bloodily trailed adown the sea-track yonder—
See ! see !—for here his blood was all out-spilled
By the foul spear-thrust—and his royal head,
Let drag along the dust, beat here and here
Against the rocks in passing !

2nd Maiden :

May it not be

That this was some mad panther-fit of him
Our Lady hath for shadow ?

4th Maiden :

Nay, but hark !

For I too have a tale that rhymes with hers,
And 'tis an ugly token, sisters ! Black,
Long-bodied, and with cheeks vermilion
It lies below the caves on the white strand—
A naked tree, and as with frantic roots
It lashed the water, its bleak head held up
A sheeted foliage to ensnare the gale.
Thus, then, by night the monster came, and spawned
Upon my silver beaches. Its black brood
Already are begun to smirch and foul
The borders of our island ; in an hour
Even these dark enchanted woods will yell
With ribaldry and ravage, and ourselves,
Sisters, become the butts of their desire !

3rd Maiden :

Our holy isle is nothing but a magnet
To draw these monsters hither ! There's a Power
Dwells in our midst, that now employs us all
Wantonly for her pleasure. What are we,
Sisters, that she should bait her vermin-traps
And snarl her prey with us ? And she, what is she ?

1st Maiden :

The Priestess of the Shrine, Harpalyce. And these,
Howso they shout, once they are gone up thither
The ancient magic shall o'ermaster them.
See you not, moving nigh you in the grass,
The snake of the pool ?

2nd Maiden :

The snake of the pool ?

(*A loud hiss.*)

Aha ! The song of the snake !

4th Maiden :

'Twas Circe taught it us against sea-comers.

Circe that came from the sea !

The Maidens sing, and circle, dancing, as they sing :

Hist ! who goes there !

Nay you—whoever you are,

For your own sake, beware,

And to our singing list.

What is't ?—A snare

In the flowers—a snake

Ready coiled in his lair ;

And not very far

From there where you stand

'Mid the hours of your dreaming,

Is the magical hand

Of Circe, out-gleaming—

Of Circe—beware !

For your own soul's sake !

Hist ! who comes venturing

Here through the flowers to Circe ?

He is awake ; his eyes are not dim :

He is warned of the Snake what to fear :

Hist ! yet he ventures a-near !

Do with him then as ye list !

Dance ye together and sing

Him the song of the snake !

Come, gather together for him

Ye virginal powers, and prepare

Your mercy !

2nd Maiden :

My mercy ? Ha, mine is the fire,
For the sun was my sire !

4th Maiden :

And mine the deep-water,
I am darkness, her daughter !

1st Maiden :

And I
Am the child of the pitiless sky !

3rd Maiden :

My mercy's the mirth
Of the old savage Earth !
Ha-ha ! Ha-ha !

Omnes :

Hist ! who goes there
Through the flowers to Circe ?
For him we prepare,
Everyone of us, that which is ours—
Leers the snake : sings the song :
And bare
Gleams the imminent white
Hand of Circe :
Weave together the Powers,—
For in each there is might,
But beware of our mercy !
Hist ! Hist ! Who goes there ?

*(As they withdraw from stage on the left and right front,
enter cautiously from right rear, peering about them
and listening anxiously, a weather-worn Herald and
Captain in faded browns, with spears.)*

Captain :

Beware how you go ! Did you not hear the snake ?

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I warrant he has his couch among these roots :
There—that is he !—nay, so deceitful flickers
The light among these boughs, I can be sure
Of nothing. Only let us go with prudence.

Herald :

This is the pool whereof Ulysses told us.
Anon the path plunges into the woods.

Captain :

Think you it carries to the other side
This dreadful thicket, twisted all together
And tangled up of thorns ?

Herald :

Ay, for beyond
Ulysses saw the forest-skirts withdrawn
About white walls—and upwards smoke arising.

Captain :

But yet he would not venture nearer to them.

Herald :

Though the moon was high he was alone i' the
night.

Captain :

O, I do not complain that he is prudent,
I only wish he ever had been. For
Mischief was in his soul that evil day
He blinded Polyphemus and drew down
Poseidon's wrath upon us, and therewith
The storms that brought us here, my friend. But hist !
Have you not noted how downcast he grows,
How now his spirit stoops and laughs no more ?

Herald :

It was no common flower, Eurylochus,
That laughter of Ulysses !

Captain :

It is dead,
And he begins despairing of his errand.
Sometimes I fear me we must choose another
Leader, if we would come back home again.

Herald :

Despair ? Another man might well despair
Thwarted as he ; but not Ulysses. Hark !
I seem to hear but a little way off yonder—
As though it were to-morrow,—the good voice
Of that great laughter. Nay, and who but he
Could ever lead us home ?

Captain :

Mistake me not.
He is my cousin, nearer me than any,
And yet I am not thinking now of us,
But of you all.

Herald :

I am Ulysses' man.

Captain :

I was not bred to follow any man.

Herald :

Nor for any to follow !

Captain :

Nay, that may be !
And yet, himself, staying yonder by the ship,
Must give to me the charge of this adventure
Whereon our fortunes hang, though all our fellows
Are red and ripe for mischief. Hark at them !
I have threatened and commanded and cajoled them,
But they are bragging-drunk with liberty.
The silence of the wood is full of evil :

The Enchanted Woods

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Sinisterly the trees smile, listening,
But they've nor ears nor eyes! And yet Ulysses—
Nay, hark you! for I cannot understand
How any man that knows the world as he
Can send upon our errand such a fool
As that Elpenor, picked up yesterday
Somewhere among the isles—a womanish oaf
With nothing in his head, save it be strange,
Unseasonable tunes—equalling him
With us, Ulysses' peers? Can you explain it?

Herald :

No, nor I would not! Is it not enough
To do the deeds he has allotted to us,
But we must prove his choice, questioning this,
Explaining that : must puzzle out anew
What he has planned, to fail him in our part?
'Grant you, the lad's a fool : he loves the lad,
Sends him along with us, not us with him,
To do the errand. Shall we carp at him
Because he loves the fool? Nay, all the more
He is Ulysses, and I love him for it!
Come, Captain! *(Exit Herald left rear.)*

Captain :

It is very plain, my friend,
That we have different services to do
Ulysses. You obey—I understand.
But no, his weakness for that fool I cannot.
It likes me not, Polites. *(He perceives he is alone.)*

Hi! Polites!

(Checks himself apprehensively.)

The trees are listening!—Hist!—We will say no more!—
The fellow has plunged into the dumb woods and left me.

I'll follow quickly ! Hist !—Polites—Hist !
Oh, but this forest is bewitched ! I know not
Whether it be my own voice whispering
Fear, or the coiled snake's warning ! (Exit.)

Voices :

Hist ! Who goes there !
Through the wood to Circe !
(Enter swiftly from the left and right front the Maidens.)

1st Maiden :

They ask for none to lead them !

3rd Maiden :

Nay, there is no need for a guide in Circe's wood.
(Voices heard on right.)

1st Maiden :

To yonder too, the way seems plain. They know
not

Whither, but come a-running in it ! Blind,
The boughs shall push them !

2nd Maiden :

Now there comes a reek
Of flesh ripe for its fall : forgetful flesh,
Smoke heavy-sweet, ashes as light as dreams.

4th Maiden :

I foretaste Circe's cup that it is ready.
(Notes of a pipe are heard far away.)

1st Maiden :

But what far cry was that across the clamour ?
It should have been a lonely shepherd's pipe
If shepherd there were any in the isle.

3rd Maiden :

I heard naught, sister. Nothing comes but rabble !
Away !

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(They hide as before. Enter, running on the right, a little fat man with a wine-skin.)

Wine-carrier :

Hail Liberty ! Thy name is Bacchus !
And ha ! I have thee ! Wisely did Ulysses,
Entrusting the god to me—Hop-o'-my-thumb—
Since being nimble-footed I have the advantage
Over these louts to make the readier use
Of his prime boon !—Ha-ha, one more good swig.
Though I die drinking !—Here's to thee, Ulysses !
(He drinks ; voices on right.)

Voices :

Stop, thief ! Stop him, Eurybates ! He has run off
with the bottle ! He is drinking all the wine !

(Enter Lieutenant, plunging blindly out of the dazzling light, and stumbling over the Carrier, who falls helplessly under the new-comer, spilling the wine.)

Lieutenant :

Thunder of Zeus ! Something is tripping me ! Help !
I am covered with blood ! Help, fellows !

Wine-carrier, under him :

Help ! Murder of Bacchus ! The wine is spilled !
We are crushed under this hippopotamus !—
(Enter, running, other sailors.)

Others :

What is all this shouting ? Ha, a back ! A back !
(In turn they come vaulting over the Lieutenant, each man stooping down, frog-fashion, for the next : one falls : there is general confusion : red with wine the Carrier extricates himself ruefully ; then, seeing his opportunity, scrambles on the Lieutenant's back and, kicking the kneeling hero's flanks, begins to sing lustily.)

Wine-carrier :

Dionysus on a goat,
And the cup between his thumbs !
The beast hath a beard upon his throat,
Wherewith he tickles his rider's legs,
And his little crank eyes are as yellow as eggs !
Sing hi-ho ! For the wine-god comes
Riding on the wine-god's goat.

(After some struggle and confusion, the others imitate the example of the Wine-carrier and the Lieutenant, forming a sort of grotesque Bacchic procession : they all join in the song and chorus, marching round the stage and then disappearing into the forest on left rear.)

Wine-carrier :

Dionysus on a goat,
And the cup between his thumbs !
Two crook-horns and a curly coat
And a couple of brace of bucking-pegs,
And a one-stump tail that a-wag-a-wag-wags.
Sing hi-ho ! for the wine-god comes
Riding on the wine-god's goat !

(Shouting) :

Come, my lads, come, my lads, this is the road to
freedom !

(Singing) :

Dionysus on a goat,
And the cup between his thumbs !
Laughter gurgles in his throat,
As he drubs with his god-like heels and digs
The belly of the beast between his legs.
Singing hi-ho-ho ! for the wine-god comes
A-riding on the wine-god's goat ! Ho !

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A-riding, ho !

A-riding, hð !

A-riding on the wine-god's goat !

(As they withdraw in the rear, enter the Maidens from the front.)

The Maidens :

Hist ! who go there

Through the woods to Circe ?

For them we prepare,

Every one of us, that which is ours—

Leers the snake : sings the song :

Gleams the imminent bare

Hand of Circe !

Hist ! who go there ! *(Exeunt, following, left.)*

CURTAIN.

Act II

The Moly Flower

The same Scene. Piping. Enter on right the piper Elpenor in faded yellow-green tunic, who comes to the pool and ceases playing.

Piper :

They have not waited for me as they promised.
They have forgot me : what am I to them,
Or they to me ? Let them forget me—Ribalds !
For this, our errand's sake, it is very sure
They and I are best quit of one another :
We seek our freedom other ways, to find her
Only apart. I will wait for Her here
Hidden amid the wood's forgetfulness. (*Sits by the pool.*)
Beauty divine ! Huntress of beast and youth !
Swift Artemis, here is thy hunting ground—
Cover and thicket and recess of gloom ;
Light that is old and young : shadow and gleam
Thronging with fleet, innumerable things
That spring out of the teeming earth to run
With the line and lilt of the branches, through this
dream
Of twilit forestry ! Who would not give
Eagerly up his youth if he might be
The quarry of thy white killing ? Who would not

The Moly Flower

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Escape from manhood to become a deer
Fleeing from thine inevitable shafts,
O Artemis, Artemis, Queen of the Wild ?
*Enter Moly in a gleaming smock with rippling yellow hair,
following the Piper, and moving as in a dream.*
Moly, as though awaking :

Ah !—

Piper, turning towards her :

Am I never then to be alone ?

Moly, looking about her apprehensively :

O, whither has your piping carried me ?

Into what dread, motionless silences ?

Piper :

Why did you follow me ?

Moly :

From the sea-banks up

By the rocky foreland, on through matted ways,
Dreaming, my feet came, for your piping drew them ;
But whither was it going, going, going ?
You cannot, of a sudden, bid it cease !

Piper :

You are full friendly ! If I go on piping
Still, will you follow ?

Moly :

Not into the wood !

Nor can you blow your pipe among the trees !
For this is Axor's Oak !—They say it keeps
Watch betwixt us and Them. Beyond is peril
For sea-folk and sea-farers !—How 'tis still !
Pipe to me—speak to me—my name is Moly.

Piper :

I had as well wait here until the night.

I doubt She is not yet abroad for hunting.—
“ Moly ”—it is a name good for the lips
Of laughing waves that run along the strand
And leap the rocks in the sunshine. Me they call
The piper, and the fool Elpenor—

Moly :

“ Fool ? ”

Piper :

I am a stranger to them.

Moly :

I was thinking,
How I myself am a light, foolish thing,
Mere play-fellow, sea-blooded. Pipe or talk
And I am satisfied ; but let there fall
Silence, and it is still—I am afraid.

Piper :

Nay, child—you need fear nothing ! Am not I
The comrade of Ulysses, the great King ?

Moly :

Ulysses—what is that name ? Ulysses—Hark !
(*Listening as though she heard a voice in the oak-tree.*)
It seemed as though I heard the oak-tree's voice
Murmur among the branches, “ It is he,
And it is his that go in peril, here ! ”

Piper :

When was Ulysses not in peril ? Nay,
But this is like enough, dear child ! Yet now
That they are gone without me, though for them
Who are his, it may be perilous, for me
Who am no longer one of them—for me
The peril is not : speak no more of it.

Moly :

I had rather dance to your pipe, or laugh with you !
I do not want to tell the secrets of the wood :
They are not mine, and the telling is not for me.
O, if some breeze would blow and rattle the leaves,
I could be merry here ! Nay, but this stillness
Is like the solemn deep-water that chides me,
Child of the ripples. The assembled trees
Observe me, and the solemn pool forbids.
Why did I follow you here to the forest borders ?
Pipe, pipe ! Or if you may not, let me go
And quickly, back to my playfellows that are
The whimsies of the wind and of the sea
Along the strand.

Piper :

But if I pipe to you
Your merrymaking voice will then be still :
I think it never told ill-tidings. Nay,
You shall not go and leave me !

Moly :

Wanderer—

Piper :

Call me not wanderer, for I will go
A-field no more.

Moly :

But these are Circe's woods,
Where, if you stay and will not pipe to me,
Nor any sea-breeze blow away the gloom,
My words must change from merry, to tell how
There is none of all these trees, but she will lay
Spells on you in the silence, dropping leaves
That are not leaves upon you as you go.

Piper :

Come then, sea-maiden, I will blow my pipe
Till you forget this Circe and her trees.
We are alone together—

Moly :

Not alone !
For They are here : the Hidden Ones are here
In league against us ! Hark !

Piper :

We are alone.
Come, I will play, and you shall dance for me,
Here on the lawn, sea-dances.

Moly :

No, not here !
No, no ! You must not !—nor I cannot, here.
About us in the stillness, everywhere
Are bodiless voices, and I hear them say :
(*She repeats the Chant of the Voices she hears*)

Little Flower, what is it lying at your feet ?
It is a leaf from far some wantoning wind has brought.
Sea-maiden, it is nothing but a leaf ;
A dry leaf caught up on some gust, whirled, swirled,
And swept at last up hither, you following, Little Flower !
Little Flower, what is it lying at your feet ?

O, there were others, but they all passed by :
Chatter they all to the bright doors together :
Circe comes out : catches them in her hands ;
“ Perhaps,” saith she, “ they are not chattering leaves :
Let me try with my white fingers what they are ” :
But—sh ! she casts them from her :
Comes a flurry of wind and whistles away.
Tread them into the mire now with your feet,

The Moly Flower

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Lady Circe has whistled them away !

Moly, Little Flower, what is it at your feet ?

(mockingly)

At your feet, your feet ? Is it a dead leaf ?

Piper, leaping up :

You mock at me ! You shall not mock at me !

Moly :

Piper, it was not I, but the bodiless voices.

Piper :

A dead leaf ! Ho, but I am quick, and quick !

(He attempts to seize her ; she flies.)

Ho ! Little Flower, it is you that shall be plucked !

Voices :

Dead Leaf ! Little Flower ! Into the mire with it !

(Laughter among the trees.)

Moly :

Father Poseidon, save me from the forest !

(She escapes on right ; he follows, but returns.)

Piper :

She mocked at me with mischief-eyes and mouth,

Then she fled down the sea-way. Let her go !

I will not follow. I am for the woods.

She would have drawn me from among the trees,

Back to the restless sea ; but I will stay :

The night shall find me on the forest-border.

Am I not come upon Ulysses' errand ?

Ulysses !—what was it she said of peril

Waiting for him and his. For him I'll watch

Till he comes hither : I'll be ears and eyes :

Truant although they call me, who but I

Shall serve Ulysses ? Let the rest go by.

Perish their ugly mouths ! They never were

Elpenor's friends. But though Ulysses beat me
With heavier hand than any, yet his eyes,
Whether I wake or sleep, are good to me.

*(Having withdrawn somewhat, he lies down and falls
asleep, concealed among the trees: the light is
dim. Confused and muffled, but mocking music,
murmurs among the forest trees. Re-enter Moly on
the right.)*

Moly:

The place is all beset with menaces:
Yet will I venture to the pool!—Ah, now
I have you, my piper, my playfellow!
Let me consider how I may carry you
To a merrier place; for now, in sooth, you are mine.

Voice from the Oak:

He is not yours who sleeps beneath my boughs.
Moly, withdrawing a little in fear:

Just keeper of the forest-borders, Axor,
Who, with thy warning snake, watchest between
The wanderer and the peril of the wood;
Who standest by the pool and tellest counsel,
Speaking among the oak-boughs!—O, god Axor,
Give him not to the forest, but to me!
He piped me all the way up from my sea-caves
Until I loved him, Axor! Shall the forest
Cheat me of him? Why should I give him up?
What need hath Circe of my playfellow?
Many she hath, and never loveth none,
But, as tales tell, their manhood furnisheth
With somewhat all too rare that greedy loom
Before whose evil-waxing web she sings.
Nay, let me cherish him, beside the sea!

The Moly Flower

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Voice :

Under my boughs his choice fulfils itself.

Moly :

Nay, see, how in his sleep he dreams of me !

Voice :

What have you that can keep his heart away
From Circe that begins to draw him thither ?

Moly :

I have sea-spells, and mine own maidenhood.

Voice :

He is a-weary of the sea, he seeks
Fierce pleasures.

Moly :

Nay, he loves me !

Voice :

What have you
Hid in your breast ?

Moly :

Nothing, god Axor !

Voice :

Yea !
But there is something hid between your breasts.

Piper dreaming :

Flower of Sea-laughter !

Moly :

O awake to me !

Voice :

Touch him not ! Take your lips away from him.
You shall not cheat him so ! It is not you,
It is the Moly-flower he summonses.

Moly :

But Axor, it is me !

Piper :

Come, Little Flower !

(She bends over and would kiss him, but is prevented.)

Moly :

O cruel, will you then deceive his dreams ?

Voice :

Here on the border of this forest, I,
Axor, let none be cheated of his choice.
And though yourself know not you carry it,
Yet, hiding in your breast, his dreaming gaze
Grown lucid with a visionary sight,
Hath seen the spirit flower, and chosen it.

Moly :

O rede me no more riddles, lest I die !

Voice :

This lad is on the errand of another,
And unto you, with love of him, is given
The talisman that must accomplish it.
Wherefore you shall not cheat him with your lips ;
The charm is in your breast, the secret flower !

Piper, as before :

Flower of Sea-laughter !—Moly—Little Flower !

Moly :

Would it had been for me that you were fain !
*(She finds a white flower in her breast, draws it forth
wondering, reluctantly kisses and gives it into the
dreamer's hands, and so, gazing on him, and turning,
and often looking back, she goes her ways to the sea
again.)*

*The light increases to broad day as Ulysses enters
meditatively, carrying a purple cloak on his arm :
he pauses by the pool.)*

Ulysses :

It was but yesternight beside this pool,
As though some kindly god had bidden him,
A royal quarry waited on my spear—
Yesternight, and again I come ! But why,
Why, publicly having forsworn this quest
And sent up them—Eurylochus for prudence,
But, lest he turn aback, faithful Polites,
Eurybates, Anchialos, and he
My vagrom lad o' dreams and the other sight
Who will never be but half a man, Elpenor—
Why, having bidden them—" Go !—I will keep the
ship !"—

Am I here at this pool again ? It is
One instance more of that continuous strife
Waging between my will and me, wherein
Some mightier purpose of my Destiny
Thrusts in athwart my choice, and I, beneath
Her grey, inevitable gaze, unsay
My well-considered words and waive my choice :
As on that early morning when the kings
Were setting forth for Troia, and they sent
Minding me of the vow I had sworn them to—
That every one of us, princes that were
Rivals together for Helen the wonder of Hellas,
Ever for worship of her that might not be
Prize of our several wooing, into a league,
Hazardous, mighty, for her fame should bind us.
But therewith, having sworn them, my heart forgot
All for Penelope, and I brought her home.

Nay, I remember that morning : I would not go
Forth to the sowing of blood, and the ploughing of seas

In a wanton's quarrel ! I harnessed me steed by steer
—A motley team—I ploughed in salt, and I mocked
Their madness that bade me forth.

I would not, yet I went.

Who was Ulysses to stay in Ithaca
With all the world for Troy ? Across the years
I see that morning :—see Penelope,
New-made a mother, with the little lad
Shining in her bright breast ; a man perverse
Of will, ever I would not ere I would.

I have had enough of perils ! Here's another.

I cannot rest : my heart will go : I am jealous
Of mine own messengers to follow them !
Well-matched am I, with this same thunder-weather,
That veers and parleys, waiting on the hour
When, from his unknown cavern bursting forth
Black-horsed upon some mad contrarious wind,
Headlong arrives the herald of the storm.

Why do they not return ? But see, they come !

*(Enter, right rear, hurrying, but ever and anon looking
behind him, the Captain.)*

Captain :

Begone, begone ! Once I am out of the wood
I shall be rid of you ! Ugh ! I can feel the whole
Herd of them following ! Horror ! Horror ! Horror !
(He perceives Ulysses standing before him.)

They follow me, Ulysses—do they not follow ?

Ulysses :

I see none following. Do you come alone ?

Captain :

O, thank the blessèd gods ! I have shaken them off
At last, and left them with the wicked woods !—

The Moly Flower

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I could never see them follow if I turned,
But, turn again, and they were there behind me !

Ulysses :

Order your speech, cousin, that I may have
Tale of the halls that lie beyond the wood,
And word of our companions.

Captain :

Word ? Ay, one
Sole word, Ulysses—"Hence !"—It is all there !
Hence ! from their ruin only I escape :
Hence ! I can tell no more among the trees.

Ulysses :

Let us spend none of our good breath in running
Down yonder, only to come hither back.

Captain :

Hence ! They are done !

Ulysses :

But yet by whom ? Where ? How ?

Captain :

O, yonder, by a woman, a witch-woman.
Her song was like some spring in a hill-meadow
Welling up full into a great black pool
Whereinto Horror looks and sees her face.

Ulysses :

But did they run and drown themselves therein
While you, sir, swam upon the magic pool ?
What vague, wild words are these, Eurylochus,
That trespass on your customary mien ?
How you are changed out of your careful self !

Captain :

Changed !—Has the horror come then upon me ?
But yet I entered not—I only heard

Afar her singing—only from afar
With loathing saw her !—Changed ! Nay, in the pool
My face is still the same—How am I changed ?

Ulysses :

From prudence into fear, my friend—as though
Hades had, from an ambush in the woods,
Lept out his grizzly company upon you ;
Or the rough god of laughter had beset
You like an earthquake, for, escaping, still
You breathe the panic air !

Captain :

Let us away,
Verily, terror lurks among the leaves !
(*Ulysses detains him with an imperious look.*)
Yet is it not so much terror, as shame
That in my flesh I have beheld and seen
Such treasons wrought my lips refuse to utter.

Ulysses :

Hark then, while I tell your tale : you shall stand by,
Assenting or demurring. You came all
To the gates, and heard the singing there within,
And all drew into it, as moths that draw
Into a lantern—saving you—for you
Are not the man could any woman fool
With whatsoever singing !—herds may follow
The piper ; stones to the lute may dance, but O,
Not you, Eurylochus !—Yet went they in
And you might not prevent them.

Captain :

Though I drew
My sword against their passage—yet they went,
Polites leading them.

The Moly Flower

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Ulysses :

He needs must go,
They needs must follow him. In spite of you,
Thus they went in ?

Captain :

I saw them come again—

Ulysses :

They are not wholly perished, then ?
(*Captain shuddering, puts his hands over his eyes*).

But no,

The woman doubtless hath some other spell
Than only singing : and I would it might
Be mightier, for I am in need of might,
Perilous though it be—the thing I seek
Is perilous. Thus our companions came
Forth of the doors, but changed—

Captain :

Look in my face,
And you have seen, without my telling it,
This day's confused and monstrous ruin—O,
They are men no longer : horrors of the night :
Shapes of enchantment ! See, again, again
They come about us—and the wood brims up
With the witch-woman's song ! I have escaped
To warn you away, Ulysses ; and to save
For the poor remnant of a goodly host
At least their leader, but at most—for yet,
In spite of these disasters that beset you,
I deem you shall at last return—their king.

Ulysses :

But yonder fellows, captive, and in thrall,

Your company entrusted to you—is it
Your counsel that we venture naught for them ?

Captain :

Let pity not deceive your generous heart
With hope forlorn ! No deed is left to do
But quickly to begone hence. Yonder queen
Is nothing but an image of deceit
Clad as a woman—fair in sooth to see—
Too fair—her beauty makes the monster more.
There is but little sword-craft to be wrought
On such as she, whom sorcery houses with.
Wherefore, Ulysses, to you my counsel is,
Keep all your pity for the remnant left you
Beside the ship, since naught can it avail
These that are gone, but only will bring down
Irreparable ruin on us all.
Naught is to win, but all is to be lost
Up yonder !

Ulysses :

You have counselled wisely—yet
Many adventures shared have made us one :
They are become my flesh.

Captain :

The witch hath penned them
Behind her styewattles : there then they batten,
Contented with the trough and with the mire !
I did not think to tell it.—Will you then
Go look on them you loved ? Or will you—O
Pardon my words, that cannot speak to you
Less than the ugly horror !—will you join
That dismally contented fellowship
Of Circe's guests, who dream that they are kings ?

Ulysses :

The plainer grows your speech, the more I thank
you,

Trusty Eurylochus. Yet now I would
I had remained beside the ship, for there,
Mayhap, I should not have forgotten all
The others of my company for yonder
So dismally contented fellowship.
They draw me to them : yet not pity draws me !
But to a new adventure, eagerly
Answering, leaps my heart !—We will go up,
And with the instance of their need will come
Counsel into my heart to succour them.

Captain, concealing his terror :

This well may be, yet first let us come down
To where the rest wait for our coming. Trust me
To do your bidding when beside the ship
Counsel is clear ; but here among the trees,
As we stand parleying, I am aware
Of heavy perfumes—and they seem to steal
Upon the brain like poison to betray us.

Ulysses :

Again you speak with prudence, but again
My soul will not consent with this delay.
The sun draws down to setting, in an hour
It will be dark. I will not let the night
Set her irrevocable seal upon
The doing of this day to end it thus
In horror !

Captain :

But Ulysses, what is done
Is done ! Then add no more to it, for in sooth,

Ill as it is, how might it be the less
In being more ?—And cousin, after all—
Ulysses :

Enough ! Your words are grown unprofitable !
Your prudence is unmanned : your counselling
Whines like a coward with its “ After all,”
Its “ What’s done’s done ! ”—Was there no passion went
To your begetting that your heart can beat
Such music, when my own cries forward ? Come !
Captain :

I’ll perish first ! Am I escaped for this ?
This were no way to serve you ! Nay, I see
The madness of the forest in your eyes !
By my good blade, you shall not go up yonder !
I will prevent you !
(*He draws and stands in Ulysses’ path.*)
Ulysses :

Stand out of my path !
Fool ! do you think your doubtful sword, that failed
To stay Polites yonder, will avail
Against my purpose ?
Captain :

Why did you not keep
Your promise ? You have broken faith with me :
Left your allotted post : spied on me : nay,
You shall not pass, Ulysses !
Ulysses :

I will pass.
(*They fight : the Captain makes a vigorous resistance, but
is disarmed.*)
That folly’s quickly done : and no blood lost.
Come, look not so glum and chapfallen ; nay,

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I have no mind to force you go up with me !
I am the better man without you there.
Go, get you down to the ship and wait for me.
Captain :

We are undone : this that I had foreseen
Is come upon us : woe that it should be !
Ulysses' company must choose another
Leader, if they would come back home again !
Ulysses :

Hark you ! You will attempt no treason ! Nay—
I trust you now for nothing, but for fear !—
You will attempt no treason, for I swear
Whoever lays a hand upon the tackling,
Or stirs a foot in the surf, the pitiless shark
Shall spoil him, and the unremembering wind
Whiten his bones upon a desolate shore !
And none shall weep for him : and he shall be
A ghost unwelcome, unbefriended, lonely
Ever among the dead : because a curse,
Ulysses' curse, shall follow him and cry
“ Treachery ” round him wheresoe'er he flee !
I swear it, calling on Athene's name,
My friend, most high !—

Answer me nothing ! Go !
(He dismisses Eurylochus, who goes dejectedly to right.)

He meant it honestly, he would almost,
Almost have died to hinder me. But now
Nothing can turn me from mine errand till
I bring my comrades with me.

*(Turning to the left, about to go up through the wood, he
discovers the Piper.)*

Here is one

That's neither changed nor perished—yet asleep
 Amid our angry words, our clashing blades,
 On the borders of the affrighting wood, as though
 There were no dire deed done, or dread to do !
 Wake thee, Elpenor ! Wilt thou go with me ?

*(Although the Piper raises his head and opens his eyes,
 there is no recognition in them, and his speech is changed
 to a rhythmical chant, as though the oak-god were using
 him as a vehicle for utterance.)*

Piper (Axor) :

Thou that would'st get thee up to yonder place,
 Surely thou seekest for some gift or grace :
 Bethink thee, ere thou enter the dark grove,
 Whether the hope thou followest may prove
 Unworth the going thither ; for no track
 Was ever known to bring the traveller back,
 Once he had crossed the sill and drunk the cup.

Ulysses :

Whate'er the coming back, I will go up.

Axor :

Dark as the grove may be, yet darker is
 The path descending to the last Abyss :
 Dread though the Woman of Mystery and Wrath,
 O yet more dreadful that descending path
 That gives upon the purlieus of the Dead—
 If such a path there be for foot to tread,
 If any foot should ever thence return.

Ulysses :

Instruct me of the way and I will learn.

Axor :

Naught of that way I tell, if way there be,—
 Yet am I not unknowing.

The Moly Flower

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Ulysses :

Counsel mē !

Axor :

This counsel : go not to yon place of power
Unguarded by the ungatherable flower
That mortal may not pluck in field or glade
Or dig about its dark root with a spade :
Star-bright its face, but horror-rooted, stark :
Sweet-perfumed, but it oozes bloody dark
Drops where its roots are torn out of the slime.
It shall anneal thee.

Ulysses :

It is like a crime
To carry the ugly thing against my flesh !

Axor :

Yet this alone defies the subtle mesh
Of the dream-maker : this alone defies
Her poison, and keeps vision in the eyes
In spite of her within whose isle thou art :
This, only this, may keep thee whole of heart,
Where nothing might avail thy shield or wit.

Ulysses :

But tell me what this flower, and whence is it ?
(*He is now holding it in his hand : and the oracle
vouchsafes no answer.*)

No answer !—nor it needs none. Yet, and yet—
These womanish spells, and this frail counter-charm,
What are they but a tissue that must vanish
Once I but challenge it with manly will,
Demanding back my comrades from their Dream ?
Can I not wake them with my naked voice,
My own mere hand ? But yet I deem this flower

Is of some simple virtue—and its juice
May change the dark complexion of this cup
Of hers. I will prove it.—But for you, lad, stay
Till I have need of you.

*(Ulysses goes up through the wood with slow, determined
step : exit left rear.)*

Piper, coming to himself :

Am I alone ?

But I heard voices. Here was the Captain : here
Ulysses stood. He spoke, and I spoke with him,
Yet what I know not ; the words were not mine.

Ulysses has gone up where I would go,
To Circe. Would I had not lingered : all
But I have taken her service : in my dream
I saw her dark, desirous woman's face.

Last of all I, who should have been the first,
Piping them thither, answering her song
Of passion with my pipe—I follow last.

(He attempts to follow Ulysses, but cannot.)

Nay, what is come to me ? I cannot stir :

I am rooted here : I am become a tree.

(Laughter is heard in the woods.)

But yet the others mock me : I am alone :

I am alone in the woods, and it grows dark.

*(With a gesture of horror he covers his eyes with his hands
and crouches down at the front of the stage.)*

O, hast thou not an arrow left for me,

Artemis, Artemis !—I am no tree,

I am a very man.

Mocking Voices echo :

A very man !

CURTAIN.

Act III

The Enchantress

Scene : A dimly lighted, almost cavern-like, but spacious interior, richly hung with bluish green tapestries, and broken by the ruddy pillars which support the roof. At the rear are high doors ; steps lead down from these to the forest and the coast. In the front centre is a hearth, and an ancient stone seat, covered with a ceremonial cloth, beside it on the left ; against the wall is a great upright loom : on the right a small stand, and a stool ; there is a carved chest against the right wall. It is a little before sunset. An old witch, almost black, clad in dark brown, is sweeping out the hall, snarling and mumbling as she does so.

Witch :

Come and gone—come and gone again !

Here's a mug for the each of you, she says, a dish for your belly, and a maid for your bed,—ay, and take your pick, but your leavings shall be mine, says she : and a' drinks, and a' kisses, and a' cannot—he ! he ! But the squealing and the scrimmage till they're gone again !

La, she's a good 'un, this queen-witch ! A quick and a ready with her jest—and smiles so as never !—You cannot but cackle at her drolleries. A score of great braggarts they were too ! With the blades and the

piques, the tatters and the beards, the mouths and red eyes of 'em ! Ripe and ravening after drink and victual, and the merrier stuff us maids are fashioned of ! I know 'em—I know 'em ! When I was a young lass—la no !—a woman is not old for naught ! Belike I could tell a tale : Gaia ! Did my old mother get me of a Sunday ?
(She shuts the great doors ; the Second Maiden enters on right, carrying a bundle of twigs.)

2nd Maiden :

You and your broom may scavenger the floor,
But they have breathed the air, befouling it.

(She casts a bundle of twigs on the hearth : it smokes.)

Witch :

Ay, they ha' left their stench behind 'em.

(She crouches by the hearth and fumbles in her dress.)

But here I've some'at—here. I'll warrant this to cure it better than all your libanum and styrax. Like for like, girl ! *(Sniffing.)* Man's grease ! Eh ? 'Twould turn the belly of a toad ! La, now, it rises like flies do from a carcase—buzz ! buzz ! buzz !

(Enter on the right, the other Maidens, carrying the implements of service—the First a zither, the Third a spinning wheel, the Fourth a golden bowl.)

4th Maiden, polishing the bowl at the stand on right :

They mouthed and fingered it, but hardly might they

Dull even its rim, so fiercely doth it shine !

3rd Maiden, handling a mass of rough, bright silk by the loom :

Unutterable as these men-beasts be,
Yet have they furnished Circe's loom afresh
With all this gleaming, many-coloured wealth !

1st Maiden, stringing her zither on the stool :

Hark ! You can hear already, while I stretch it,
How the gut cries—O, wilder than the wind !
I'll still serve Circe while she disentangles
So pure a fibre from so gross a flesh.

Witch, glowering over the hearth :

Buzz ! buzz ! It's strong enough to fructify !
Eh, but what's that I see?—A rat, a red rat run-
ning in the embers ! He runs ! He jumps into my
lap ! Ah-h-h !

(She runs shuddering out on right.)

2nd Maiden :

How villainous the creature is !

1st Maiden :

To think

She is bred of the same human stuff as Circe,
Whom we, that are not human, stand beside
This ugly thing, and serve.

4th Maiden :

Hist !—It is she !

(Enter on left, tall, dark with raven hair, and fire-red robe, her olive arms bare to the shoulder, Circe. The Maidens rise as she enters. As she goes to her loom, the Second draws it from the wall, uncovering it : the Third brings her new thread on a shuttle. Having herself lowered the web, she begins to weave. As she proceeds in silence, the design becomes rapidly plain to see, showing, in broad, archaic fashion, the enchantress seated, mixing a potion in a bowl, while a fair, bearded man, in sailor's hat, approaches, raising his hand as if in greeting or invocation ; on either side of these two stand brute-headed human figures, pitifully attempting

to intervene. The First Maiden, having strung her zither anew, begins to play.)

4th Maiden, looking on the web :

Where have I seen that face ? Last night 'twas he
That swam the ripples in the mixing bowl,
Like some divine seafarer.

2nd Maiden :

And I saw

That face i' the fire : steadfastly bright it shone,
Changed not with the gleeds, nor ate itself away.

1st Maiden :

Lady, the strings cry out for you to sing
Your weaving song ! Methinks some mighty one
Even now approaches by the forest way.

3rd Maiden, spinning, on right :

If they should herald him that yesternight
Did murder there—here's stuff to tangle him !
(*Circe sings, moving to and fro, plucking the warp threads,
and throwing the gleaming shuttle : a red fire on hearth.*)

Circe :

When Day, slow-footed, stooping,
Awearily lets fall
His great gold cup, and all
The wonder that it held
Flaming outflows
A molten flood of fire,
Till like a red, red rose
Heavily drooping
The gloaming is fulfilled
With heart's desire :
—There's yet a redder rose,
A redder blood-red fire ;—

The dark rose blown
In my sea-thicket lone,
Wine that I sup
From my sea-secret cup.

(A blue fire.)

The night-dark Queen of splendour
Ascends with beams unshorn.
She winds her clear white horn
With starry breath,
Till all the billowy throng
Of living souls reply ;
Yea, from the sills of death
Thousands attend her,
But all their myriad cry
Is one wild song—
There's yet a wilder song,
Catching a wilder breath,
When the quick and the dead
On my fey-loom I wed :
The words that I sing
From their fey-passion spring.

(Changing flames of blue and red.)

Cryptic, divine, forbidden,
Enraptured of the night,
Is that fruit of delight
Whose purple blood divides
The heart from any ill :
But who knows where it hides ?
I keep it hidden
In mine enchanted hill
Amid the sea.
—There is no bliss besides

My boon of being free
 Save but these twain :—
 All my wild cup to drain,
 And to take for his flesh
 This my fey-woven mesh.

Voice without :

Ho, there ! within !—

Circe :

Open our doors to him.

(The gloomy halls glow redly : Circe winds up her weaving, while the Second Maiden pushes back the loom, the Fourth sets the great bowl on the stand, the First is still striking chords from the zither, when the Third, having set her spinning wheel on left, opens the doors, that give on the porch and court, letting in a flood of red light. Against the sky and sea-line stands a bearded man in sailor's hat : a panther slinks beside him).

2nd and 4th Maidens :

The face against the sky, Circe, the face !

3rd Maiden, at the door :

Stranger, what brings you as the sun sets, hither ?

Ulysses :

Three several matters, maiden : first, this creature
 Serving me through the intricacies of the wood
 As a dog may some blind old beggar man—

Third Maiden :

He hath done well, doing his part to-night.

Ulysses, mockingly :

Ill done or well, 'tis plain his part is done.

(Panther slinks away.)

Secondly, my seaworthy legs have brought me :

Thirdly, my heart and errand.

The Enchantress

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Circe, in the shadow of a pillar on the left front by the loom :

Wanderer,

Be welcome here, whither and whencesoever !

Ulysses :

I thank that royal voice in the blood-red gloom
That now it hath done singing condescends
To common speech ! In sooth I am a beggar.

3rd Maiden, leading him in :

Our treasure house is heavy as a rose
With far forgotten, nay, forbidden dreams,
Hope elsewhere blighted, promise else unkept,
Fugitive forms of passionate desire—

1st Maiden, still fingering her zither :

Here will we satisfy you, wanderer,
Till all the ache of wandering be forgot.

Ulysses, seating himself on the stool by the hearth and regarding her :

Forgot ? What is all this about forgetting ?—
But will ye give me that which I shall ask ?

2nd Maiden, tending the hearth :

Nay, doubt it never !

Ulysses :

Little may it avail,
Though ye be spangled like the night sky over
With pleasures, though ye shepherd such desires
As that, for any one of your flock, another
Should give you worship—if among them be not
This I am seeking—

4th Maiden, bringing in a wine jar and phials :

Have we ever failed,
Lady, to fill the cup of any yet ?

Ulysses :

The cup is deep : a man might drown in it !
Nay, and I ask—When one is come a-seeking
And is set down—as I am set—among you,
Do ye not waken in him some desire
Other than that was in his heart—till he
Forget, forget his errand and be done ?

3rd Maiden, returning to her spinning wheel :

Often, in sooth, we are fain to give him glimpses
Of happiness which he might never guess.

2nd Maiden :

It is not in the compass of his hope
What wealth of pleasure is laid up in store
Here for him.

4th Maiden :

Nor the giddy joys above,
Nor whirling joys beneath !—But after Circe
Hath mixed for him the guest-cup, it may be
That rising from beneath its bubbles, he
Will catch his soul's desire that hitherto
Seemed too-audacious, too-bewildering—

3rd Maiden :

But she will make it his—

Ulysses :

Will make it mine !
Ha ! maidens, ha ! it may be !—But for me,
My choice is settled : if I ask for silver
Bring me not gold, for silver I will have
Or I'll have nothing.

Circe :

Guest, do you not waste
Words, since you tell us not what is your choice ?

Ulysses :

Should I not waste them, rather, telling you ?
For this I seek, I doubt ye have it not.

Circe :

Yet, being come hither, you should ask for it.

Ulysses :

What if already I have asked and gotten
Such answer as I cannot take from any ?
Hither I sent up certain on this quest—
Some were great hearts, worthy of welcome ; some
Poor, sorry fellows that ye might have bettered—
But hence ye thrust them, worser than they came.

1st Maiden, with her zither on right :

We send none hence but as themselves have chosen !

Ulysses :

Nay, then, ye wry their choice ! Ye plant false
lusts

Or foolish in their hearts that do betray them !

Circe :

You parley long, stranger, and evil words
I hear you give my maidens, but I hear not
Your errand or your name ; would you perchance
Conceal them from us ? That were idle : these
You speak of, spake of you as of their chief.

Ulysses :

My name ?—Ulysses ! Do your worst with it !

Maidens, hissingly :

Ulysses !

Circe :

Nay, Ulysses, as you will.
Yet would I fain do better than my worst,
Aiding your errand, since you come to me.

Ulysses :

I am come seeking Freedom—but methinks
I am come into a dungeon seeking it.

Circe :

Your eyes are still withholden of the daylight,
And of the mystic voices ye hear none.
Wherefore must ye my maidens every one,
And we, whom ye have chosen hierophant,
Prepare his eyes and ears that they discover
The place where he is come !—Close to the doors,
Bring in the torches ; bathe and clothe our guest !
While we also make ready what is ours.

(She goes out on left.)

3rd Maiden, closing the doors :

The day goes down into his cave to sleep,
The day is done.

Ulysses :

Shut not his splendour out !

4th Maiden :

'Tis all shed now, and every living drop
Gathered into this westward leaning grail.
But lest the night ghosts and the thirsty dead
Should steal it, we must seal our treasure up.

3rd Maiden :

When the sun sets this air is fever fraught.

Ulysses :

Less perilous, now that those great doors are shut,
Less perilous the forest : for within,
And not without, the feverish dark distils
Into this cup, within these prisoning walls
(Circe returns with her wand.)

Wherein, panther ! your eyes burn through the blind,

Unfriendly dark : 'tis plain you do not love
The sunlight !

1st Maiden :

Nor do you the darkness love !

*(Enter 2nd Maiden, on right, with a torch in either hand,
which she sets on stands near the front of the stage.)*

Ulysses :

Now haply shall I see you where you hide
Among the pillars of your blood-red gloom,
Dreading the daylight as I do not dread
Your darkness !

2nd Maiden :

Honoured guest of Circe's halls,
Our lady and we all her maidens, bid you
Behold the secret glories of her shrine,
The magic of this dim and holy place
Whereof she is the priestess and the queen.
With her own wonder-weaving hands she wrought
These wonders that the light rejoices in !

Ulysses, still gazing at Circe :

There is nothing in these halls but only you.
The heavy-lidded torch-light worships you,
The shadow-making flames delight in you.
What do you need of magic, when your breath
And passage is the soul's bewildering ?
But I know wherefore I am come, and wherefore
Your magic and your might dismay not me !

*(Circe has passed close to Ulysses, going to prepare the
guest-cup : she does not answer his words.)*

3rd Maiden, leading him to the stone seat on left centre :

She bids us set you in the sacred seat
And wishing-place : seated, she will make good

To the last syllable your heart's desire,
 When, purified both in and outwardly
 By sacred cup and basin, fitly clad
 In her own handiwork, and wheeled about
 By all her tributary powers, your heart,
 Enlarged by all the rites of franchise, makes
 Choice, though it be a new-created world.

Ulysses :

Let her restore that she has robbed me of !

2nd Maiden :

If that should be your choice—a doubtful one

To be so set on—

4th Maiden :

Yet it shall be yours !

If the choice hold ye shall not lack of it.

2nd Maiden :

Now with her hands the draught she mixes for you.

1st Maiden, bringing a cloak from the chest :

Her fingers wrought this cloak I clasp about you.

Ulysses :

Ay, round my throat ! But though her fingers
 wrought it

Maybe it will not throttle me ! There goes

My last companion ; pray you treat him well !

*(She takes his old cloak away. Enter 4th Maiden with
 water and Witch with basin, etc.)*

Ulysses :

How close you peer at me, mother of men !

Perchance you too are seeking someone lost,

If he should come to you again, disguised.

Witch :

La, we are wondering, stranger, what's this we ha'

found ; and what will be the merry end for him of seeking ; and why he must so knit his brows at sight of God's fair creatures !

Ulysses :

Come, mother, I am like to be but thoughtful !

Witch :

Come, lad, be merry while you may, and make an end of frowning : what better end could a man make ?
(They now leave Ulysses seated alone with Circe, who is preparing the potion on the right of the stage.)

Circe chants :

Mighty minims whom I stir
 With my chosen juniper,
 Hark, into the ears of ye
 Whisper now the one-and-three
 Messages of mystery—

(She stoops over the bowl, mumbling four magic names.)

While they fill you full of fire
 Fiercer than the heart's desire,
 Your excessive tongues I slake
 With the spittle of a snake,
 And again the words awake :

(She bends down as before)

Now I charge you with the power
 Of mandrake and the poppy-flower :
 Now with terror of the sea
 And its change : of Hecate,
 Hypnos, lord of dreams, and ye—

(Mumbling again)

In your many-mingled might
 Leap his lips, and with the sleight
 And the magic of my art

Snatch the purpose from his heart,
Tear his mortal soul apart !

(She mumbles)

Mighty minims whom I stir
With this chosen juniper,
In the secret ears of ye
I have said the one-and-three
Syllables of mystery—
And hear me, Thou, O separating Sea !

*(Circe approaches Ulysses bearing the bowl : he starts,
as though recovering his wits at her approach.)*

Circe :

Here is the cup : I have spoken into it
Forgetfulness of the contentious past,
Freedom from aught that stays and thwarts the hand
Desire puts forth upon accomplishment,
And might.

Ulysses, taking it :

Your breathing quickened somewhat in it.
It is brimful of untamed passion. Ha,
But I will tame it ! For I too have words.

Circe :

Nay, drink according to what rite you will.

Ulysses :

Now, ere ever I sup,
I'll drop into the cup,
Whether for ill or good,
This from the witch's wood.

I wot not will the flower
Double the potion's power.

Yet, ere ever I sup
I'll drop it in the cup.

'Maybe that it shall quell
The witch-broth better than well,
Curdle the milk of it,
Quicken and clear my wit :

But, come what will, I vow
I'll take this hazard now :
Drop the flower in the cup
And drink the liquor up.

(He pours a little of the wine on the ground, rises and raises his hand)

To you, earth-Mother, stable and sure ! To you
My fellowship ! I drink to you, Freedom !
Nay, and to you—and let your magic help you
Now that Ulysses drinks—to you, Circe !

(He drinks, and therewith a weird moaning fills the forest without, and is heard in the halls : Circe fixes her eyes upon him : having drunk, he gives back the cup, which she replaces on right.)

Ulysses sinking into the seat :

You promised mightily, now mightily
Shall you fulfil. But I am not a man
In haste to be content. New power, though yet
Obscure, possesses me : a myriad thoughts
Surge through my brain : my heart is big : I hear
Afar and far the thunder drawing hither :—
I sit, and like a pageant all the world
Goes by me till it come, till with its shout
It clear the dimness from the dizzy air.

(Enter the Maidens with others veiled : at a sign from Circe they form a circle about Ulysses and her : he gazes before him.)

Circe, in the centre with her wand :

We have set you in the sacred seat of choice :
We have given you the cup fulfilled of might :
And now with all the shapes that men desire
We do enwheel you.—

(The dancers begin to circle slowly about Ulysses from left to right—flickering and evasive lights playing over them—their movement presently eddying, changing and becoming ever more complex and bewildering to the onlooker.)

Circe sings :

While they dance together, swaying to and fro,
All the world into their dance begins to flow :
I have set the mountains free and they go,
Loosed the sun and moon, the stars also,
While they dance together, swaying to and fro.

Dancers sing :

Whither were ye going that ye would not stay
Circled by the wonder of delight and delay,
Till the old wild struggle wear itself away,
The slack sail sleep, the stupid oars decay—
Whither were ye going that ye might not stay ?

Strive not any more nor struggle to attain.
Who is there has gathered fruit of his pain ?
Back into the vague it vanishes again,
And the surges roar and the toil is vain—
Strive not any more, nor struggle to attain.

Only to remain with us is to be wise—
Ours the mystic caverns where strange dreams arise :

Ours the silent waters with revealing eyes :
A fire inflames our earth : a passion fills our skies :
Only to remain with us is to be wise.

(The great doors open of themselves on the moonlit forest.)

For we weave together in an eddying ring
All the secret raptures that the poets sing,
Till your heart forget that far and futile thing
That enslaved its spirit unto wandering—
While we dance together in an eddying ring.

*(Many shadowy forms entering from the forest now weave
in among the dancers, each one passing in turn near to
Ulysses, and holding out her hands to him for a moment
before fading into the whirling throng) :*

Now into our measure and into our song,
In and out its footing and its words among,
'Wildering, comes the murmur of the forest throng
With a myriad movement and a myriad tongue,
Weaving through our measure and into our song.

Now before you all appear and reappear—
Round you, round about you thronging, near and near.
Single at the centre of this whirling sphere
Shall you pluck the flower of that your heart holds dear,
While the myriad forms appear and reappear.

*(The dancing ceases with the song : the silent dancers
part away from the front of the stage, leaving a space
about Ulysses ; one and another now approaches
him in turn, while Circe stands with her wand on his
right : all is in gloom except the dancer before him, the
wand, Ulysses' face, and the moonlit opening of the doors.)*

1st Dancer :

Surcease from strife and sweet prosperity
Are mine, O king ! and they await for thee !

(Ulysses turns from her.)

2nd Dancer :

Ne'er did I miss my quarry by land or sea !
Ulysses, hunter !—I am the mate for thee !

(Ulysses turns from her.)

3rd Dancer :

Wanton am I of the shadows, as well may be
Whose wit is ever awake, as thine for thee !

(He turns away.)

4th Dancer :

Searcher, Ulysses ! I carry the secret key
Of Earth, her wisdom, and it is mine for thee !

(Circe watches him keenly as he turns away again, after a longer pause : the other dancers draw nearer, and begin to clamour menacingly.)

The Dancers :

Choose, choose—thou that hast drunk of Circe's cup !
Lady, he flaunts us—bid him that he choose—
The man is ours !

Ulysses :

These are but phantoms. Though
With voices of insatiate desire
They clamour for my choice, over them all
Triumphs the flower of the wood : beckons to aid me
A blast of spirit, and makes mock of them.
There was sea-laughter in that mighty cup
Mixed with the poppy juice—and now I see !
Nay, set your own eyes on me—lest beholding
Other too dark insufferable eyes,
I shout aloud the wild song in my blood !

Dancers :

Choose, choose !

Ulysses :

Nay, what are ye to choose from ? What—
 You tusks under a snout—that call you Peace !
 You—Glory—vain dog of the howling pack !—
 You treacherous cat-o'-the-woods with harlot pelt !
 You, snake, sneaking alone among the tombs !
 Masqueraders—did you suppose your masks
 Would shelter you from me ! Hence, I have chosen.
(Dismisses them. They draw away, moaning angrily.)

Circe :

What would you ?—Freedom ? That was in the cup :
 Or your companions—but behold, they come !
(A gorgeous procession of personages enters from the forest.)

Ulysses :

Who are ye ?

The Leader :

Creatures of our Lady's love :
 Her wealth, her power, pleasure, and knowledge all
 Being ours by choice have made us what we are.
 We were your fellows once, Ulysses, whom
 You loved : but she has made us kings and wise.
 O, even as we, Ulysses, choose the lot
 Of them she blesses, all their cares gone-by :
 Come and complete again our fellowship.
(They fawn on him.)

Ulysses :

Now these that were my friends are but become
 Baits for my soul's undoing, for my love
 Wills ever to be one again with theirs—
 But never thus !—Go ! get you hence ! Away !
 Ye are but men-beasts of contrarious form,
 Till I shall challenge her and set you free.

(They flee from before him : the others crowd about him, howling and clutching at him.)

Circe :

Will you not follow, being free to go,
Before these do you mischief—since your eyes
Choose none of all ?

Ulysses :

Nay, it is yours to guard me
Till you have rendered me my choice : and still
In your hand you hold what should compel these
shadows.

Circe, threateningly :

One touch of this white wand implacable
And you, in whom runs the transmuting wine,
Fluid beneath the human mask you wear,
Make answer to its question, and declare
Yourself irrevocably.

Ulysses :

And declare me
Clean of these falsehoods that beset me still,
These ghosts that are not what their words declare them.
Why do you hesitate ?

Circe :

Are you not one
Of those brave apparitions that the sense
Adjudges men because they have the shape
And boast the flesh of more substantial gods,
But are not ? Who, at instance of my touch,
Prove but as ill-tied faggots, fall apart
Suddenly, kindling sticks for any fire,
Ripe for whatever lust—to perish all
In the flame and reek of burning, did not I

Snatch from their wreck somewhat my maidens know
How to attemper until it become
Stuff for my loom and song ?—Yet if he be not,
If at this last he be not changeable,
Crumble not, but stand stedfast, prove himself
A man—!

Ulysses :

Is somewhat lacking that you wait ?

Circe :

Having seated you upon the ancient seat
Of franchise, I, Circe, that have the power,
Bid you of all these myriad forms of life
Take what you will, and be whatso you will—
Choose !

(The gloom thickens as she strikes him lightly with her wand.)

Voices :

Choose ! Choose !

Ulysses, rising from the seat :

Ha-ha ! ha-ha !—O goodly cup
That fills me full of laughter once again !
The man I am, the thing I will, the choice
Holds fast—nor more nor any less. But you—
Your touch but loosens out my sword to smite !
He'll see if there be any truth at all
'Mid these illusions.—Down, mockers of men !

(Vivid flashes of lightning reveal a gibbering crowd of hideous beings, beast-headed and gaunt, grovelling before Ulysses. Only Circe stands robed in her former fashion.)

Yea you, kneel down before me !—For I come
With laughter in my heart, but in my hand

This mocker of your mocking,—leer for leer
He gives you !—Shall I smite you with my wand ?
Shall I deliver you to Death, and let you
Wrestle together ? Where are all your flock ?
(*Another flash shows the hall almost empty*)
What, is naught left for you to bargain with
If I might sell you life ? (*Thunder.*) Now the sky splits !
(*A roaring storm full of voices.*)
In vain shall you let loose the hurricane,
It is become my laughter, grown so great
You cannot ever staunch it ! Answer me,
Or I will cleave your sullen silence ! Speak !
Circe, flinging her arms about his knees :
I know you, and I name you with the full
Title to freedom that my lips have thirsted
So long to give : for now I hail you, MAN !
(*Ulysses' raised sword falls from his hand. Tense silence.*
Without, the sound of rain passing away.)

CURTAIN.

Act IV

Cup and Sword

*The same scene : the action continues without a break.
Circe and Ulysses are alone : she is still at his feet, her
arms about his knees : his sword lies on the floor, his face
is pale : a cold, dim light.*

Ulysses :

What do you kneeling there and crying to me
“Man !”—Am I not Ulysses of the Isles
Come hither to compel you render back
What you have robbed from me ? But now you think
With one poor, flattering, vain word you can
Cheat me of Freedom ? Or that I will give you
Quittance for your just debt because you play
The woman to me ? You have made promises
That hardly could deceive me—let them pass !
I ask no more than I have won of you
In fair play—and I staked my manhood on it !

Circe :

Nor do I give you less than you have won,
Crying the word that is become your name—

Ulysses :

What ! am I not Ulysses ?

Circe :

As you will !

What would Ulysses ? Yonder lies his sword
And we are undefended and alone :
Doubtless he can compel and punish us
If we should fail in anywise, or thwart
His masterful desire. We are pledged indeed
To do our woman's most to satisfy him.
Ulysses, prosaically, at the doors :

You can but lie ! Even to Death himself
You offer nothing real ! You are barren
Of all I seek ! And your ten thousand wiles
Sicken my heart, even amid its laughter.
But was there then within that mighty cup
That brimmed with such a tide of promise—nothing ?
And in your vow of succour, when I saw
Sudden as in a lightning flash, the power
That thwarts my purpose of accomplishing,
And on the flash your promise like the clap
And oath of thunder—was your promise nothing ?
(Coming back into the hall.)
Are you indeed without the might you boasted,
Queen only of illusions, Queen of nothing ?
You proffered me indeed the shapes beneath
Manhood, seeking to profit by the exchange,
But when my resolute manhood would not, you
Had nothing. Have you nothing for me—nothing ?
Circe :

You have refused my creatures : and myself
Have laughed to scorn—Circe, the Pitiless.
(She turns and seats herself left.)
Ulysses :

A proud, high name until I bankrupt it :
A shameful name for any man to speak

Until I shamed the shamelessness of it :

But now let it be silent ! (*He paces to and fro.*)

Circe :

Yet beware,

Son of the sunlight, in whose human veins

The strange sea-laughter made its boast against me !

I have a name more dread than Circe's name—

Woman and daughter of the sun am I.

The Moon I am, and in the thoughts of men

Fever, that bids them leave the paths of life

To follow shadows down a shadowy way.

They look on me, they thirst for things forbid :

They come to me in their strength, they fall from me

In weakness, they come to me for delight,

I take away their substance : all the forest

Yonder is full of their vain shadowy shades !

The Sun my sire, my mother was the Sea.

Down to her source and spring the daylight pierced :

The wild sea-darkness gulfed it, and conceived me !

O, give him heart that plunges in my whirlpools—

For none of all the swimmers yet that dared me

But he went down to Hades !—Tempt me not,

Ulysses, with your boasting !—Pitiless

My passion as the unaccompanied sea.

Ulysses, pacing to and fro again :

Chafe me not with your echoing words, as though

You whom I know for but a woman—ay

And, by my manhood, a defeated woman !—

Were of the god-kin—(*facing her*)—Hark'ee ! What I am

You know—none better. Am I hero, god ?

No whit !—I am a man of the same flesh

As hitherto with your accursèd spells

You have contrived to ruin,—but in me
Stedfast it proves against your cunning, laughs
Challenging yours with steel ; until your knees
Give down, and you cry mercy of a man !
For all your magic and your mystery
I will yet have the truth of you—blunt truth !
Who and whence are you ?

Circe :

I am of the East.

My name, you have it. Erst it was the name
Of one in Colchis where the saffron blows
With music, and the earth breaks into fire.
Wed was she, but her spirit was unwed,
And tumult came of that. Till he that first
Drank the divine, sweet draught that in her cup
She wist to mingle was the prince whose bed
Was bondage to her. And she fled the place.
Hither across a troubled sea she came,
Following aye the Sun, and as he sank
Stayed on this lonely strand. Turning, she slept
The first night in a mountain cave, and dreamed,
O such a dream as, like a sudden rock
Thrusting athwart an onward rushing race
Of waters, sunders it : and when she awoke
Came to her the Four Maidens of the isle,
And hailed her priestess of the Holy Place
Wherein, unwitting, she had dreamed the dream.
Ulysses, who has seated himself on the stool by the hearth :
Though truth you tell, you tell it as a tale.

Circe :

Did you not bid me tell you such a tale,
Dreamy, unreal ? Nay, of you and me

Cup and Sword

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When the tale tells it will be such another ;
So strange does the truth seem, the tongue avoids
Its telling, and the hearer hears instead
Some strange but less unlikely tale, and thinks
“ Ay, this is truth.” So they who took my cup
And drank its wonder, hid themselves from seeing.
They never did behold the Form that stands
Within the shadows of this ancient shrine
And shares this palace—yea, for we are twain,
I and this Other.—They that drank the cup
Saw the gloom fill with kindly dreams, and then
Escaped into the wood.

Ulysses :

But I that drank
And laughed those kindly dreams to scorn, and stood
Over you with my sword, demanding Truth
Of you, O many-worded woman—I
Still stand unsatisfied, and I will yet
Have Freedom of you, or I will destroy
This shrine that stinks of falsehood—and with it
The scarlet wanton that, in the drunken dream
Quaffed from her cup, her worshippers adore.

Circe, scornfully :

Freedom !—Do I withhold it ? Peradventure
You do not know the thing you ask of me,
Nor how to grasp it, given into your hands—
Ignorant, held out at a venture—hands
That know not what it is they close upon
Unless it be a sword ! Nor cannot hear—
Dull ears !—the emancipating syllable
They wait for—the true name whose giving sets
The hearer free—but still refuse to hear

The wonder spoken !—Who are you that ask
For Freedom ?—but the splendour that she is
Is nothing to your passionless, cold blood,
That quickens not for all her beauty ! No,
The cup is not between us—but between us
Is your own stubborn heart !

Ulysses :

And it holds fast
Its errand : and does not forget—howso
Sun-fierce or woman-kind you look on me—
Your own hands' handiwork, the deeds' deceit
That you shall yet undo—O, you to prate
To me of Truth ! . . .
And there is this besides to stand between us,
The sea that I will cross—for I will come
To Ithaca, and to her that waits for me.

Circe :

You picture still some woman waiting for you
As though nor time nor chance could change her
mood ?

Ulysses :

Whate'er befall, whether to me or her,
I know that in her heart which cannot change.
Myself, I may be but a wandering
And changeful man, but even also in me
Somewhat abides, and draweth back to her.
I have no double mind ; I give myself
To the day and its adventure ; but for her,
I know that she abides.

Circe :

And doth she stand
Between us—that pale woman ?

Ulysses :

As the flower—

I put into the draught you mixed for me,
That kept me whole, who otherwise had been
Parted among the phantoms of desire—
So amid these various voices of the world
That I must heed and answer, she keeps sure
My purpose, that wins back to her : but else
She hinders me from nothing.

Circe :

Other women

Are wool to stop the ears of them they love,
But this is the true comrade—bids you go,
And brings you home after the journey's done.
A woman to my heart, and such as she
Perchance might prove me : bid my lover go,
Welcome him once again, and then—farewell
Forever !—But to her you will come home—
And so an end of ventures ?

Ulysses :

There's no end

To life's adventure save the bourne of Death.

Circe :

The bourne of Death ! Nay, if you could but
hear,

How I would teach you ! I that only know
The mystery of Freedom ! But woe, woe !
If ever I should speak, or hearing, you
Should take the peril that was born with me
And breathes amid my very breath—and woe !
If I should never speak it, never you
Answer and cry the one availing word

That can redeem me from the curse I bear,
And set you forth on the great adventure, free !

Ulysses :

Woman, if but your beauty would disdain
The black, villainous magic, the deceit,
The treacherous crafts you use—if sun and sea
Born, your irradiating eyes would shine
With a clear splendour !—But instead they mind me
Of men I have known, defeated and deflowered
By alien bedfellows, who were the scarlet
The poppy-flowers of Death.

(Circe withdrawing to the left front, and Ulysses slowly following her, they pause in the shadow of a pillar. Mocking laughter is heard in the woods without. There enters at the great doors, the Piper, who cannot see them : Circe signs to Ulysses to keep silence.)

Piper :

I am too late !

(The mocking sounds seem to enter with him.)

Though I have broke at last out of the wood
That held me back from her, she is not here.
And I, her worshipper—alone of all
Who sought her, seeking as her slave, her own,
For no vain hope, nor shameful lust, as they—
But because only of them all I am
The prey of Beauty—shall I only then
Be cheated of beholding Circe's face ?

Circe, in the shadow :

What would you, that come hither in the night
Unbidden, breaking thus upon our peace
With your unhallowed cry ?

Piper :

I am a man
In whom there is but one hope, and it is
That he may look upon your face, and feel
Your eyes devour his living flesh, and be
Trampled beneath your terrible white feet,
Huntress of the enchanted wood !—and die.
(He kneels before her to kiss her feet.)

Circe :

To-night we are not hunting, nor can hunt
Dogs nor tame cattle. Fawn not on my feet.
(She spurns him.)

Piper :

Sorceress ! drive me not, and all unchanged
Into the wood where manhood is against me !
For all the rest thou changedst : only I
Loathing this flesh thou loatest, longing for
Thy wine—

Circe :

Ulysses drained my cup—begone !

Piper :

Nay, not Ulysses ! O, my king—not he,
Ulysses !

Circe :

Go ! and take my scorn with you
For company in the dim, enchanted wood :
When the trees mock you, think that it is I.
What things soe'er you see under the leaves
And feel among the shadows, let them be
My face, mine eyes, my feet ! Ha ! let them be—
Circe for you—begone !

(She thrusts him out and mocking shapes receive him.)

Many a night

Long have we hunted the wild forest through,
Gushes of hot blood and the threshing rain
To slake our heats out ! But this night of nights
We hunt no more.

(She closes the doors : screaming heard without.)

Ulysses :

Is this your womanhood ?

The syllables you speak take terror from you :
Your curse lights upon him I love !—And I—
I have looked on and seen you with your cold,
Beautiful, horrible, enigmatic smile,
Breaking his wayward heart. Pitiless woman !
I loved him and stood by : and, though I hear
His cries proclaiming your accomplished deed
And calling on my pity and my wrath,
I go not ! Though I see you, spider-like,
Crouch in among your webs that you may take
Whatever freedom-seeking spirit shall
Try its uncertain wings, entangle it
And suck its manhood out—I go not ! Nay,
But I do not forget !—My ears are full
Of cruelty, my eyes of shamefulness,
My heart of might ! But patient is my will.
You are Circe, you are pitiless : so be it.
I did not come to you beseeching pity ;
I am no lad to snatch at your delights,
Nor yet a man hasty in wrath. I am come
Hither upon an errand charged with change :
And when I answer, it is you shall go,
With these same magic-making hands to unmake
Yon images of falsehood, and restore

The manhood you have filched away from them
To make your webs of—All their filaments
Are cheated longing, hopes deceived, while they,
The beings you have ravished, are become
Incorporate in beastliness, content
Amid their filth as you amid vanity.
But you shall give my comrades back to me.
Come !

Circe :

In the dawn it may be I will come,
When I have proved your manhood, if it can
Arouse within me some abysmal joy,
Some vision that, awaking, will lift up
A face clear from the enmity and gloom
These dull and ineffectual things have brought
About me.

(Ulysses brings a blazing torch to the loom.)

Nay ! what is it you are doing ?

(The web seems to scream as the flame catches it.)

Murderer !—now indeed you are a man,
Destroyer of beauty, whose delight is in
Ruin and flame, ravine and rape and sword !
What life is there in men to equal this
Wild visionary joy that I had won
From far before the world, beyond the world !
But you have slain it—

Ulysses :

And I have set free
Ten thousand spirits from a prison-house !
They cry, being unaccustomed to be free,
Being strange and naked in the world again,
But you shall clothe them. With my hand I have

Cancelled forever this your hands ill-wrought,
And now it stands no more between my soul
And faith in her that wrought it. There remains
Your part to do, but chiefly you yourself
To win to it. For I doubt not of your power,
But whether it be in you to keep faith
With god or mortal. There's a treacherous dark
That lurks behind the dazzle of your smiles,
A black pool underneath the green and gold
Of the water-lilies.

Circe :

You were oft forewarned,
And now again against myself I warn you :
Better that you should go ; for even in you,
—When we are nigher yet—shall I not find
Some flaw, and of a sudden snatch away
Your manhood, to make good with it the ravage
It boasted to have wrought ?

Ulysses :

Nay, I am come,
Because you are the peril Beauty is,
The shepherdess of dream and of desire,
And of whatever more of magic may
Separate flesh from soul ; because you stand
Withholding them asunder, till in you
Our passion and our curse are come to flower :
Therefore—for now I see a purpose break
Across my path perplexed—Therefore, not else,
Am I come hither to demand of you
That true thing that behind your falsehood shines ;
Might of your magic, of your peril root,
The secret promise hidden in your eyes ;

That of your darkness you enfranchise me
To thread my way through whatsoe'er abyss,
Waken up manhood howso wrapt about
In dreams, and that no longer you shall be
Jealous of manhood nor his enemy.

Circe :

Ah, now you take the Name, I am no more
An enemy ! And he is come at last
After these oft-reiterated years
Of empty boasters, rathe false promisers,
Vowers of vows unkept that loudly called them
Men : for you have this truth they never had
Faith to take with the bright the sullen thing
That shadows it, the labour with the prize.
To your undaunted, truth-demanding gaze
My secret spirit answers, and I know
Through all my being an immortal breath
Blow like a clarion from beyond the dark
Of the Abyss, and triumph through the dark.

Ulysses :

Tell me the secret that is in your flesh.

Circe :

Come, till it tell you.—O, how your eyes blaze !

Ulysses :

And now your own, O Daughter of the Sun,
They challenge ! Let me look into the eyes
That blazed across our pale, bewildered sight
Illusions mightier than the timid things
That met them ! Let me look into your eyes
That, as a lantern shines onto the wall
Visible shadows, so mightily shone
Imaginings into the brain, until

Dazzled, the will forgot itself, forgot
That Man toward whom it struggled, whom alone
Its purpose might painfully realise,
Relinquishing its unaccomplished hope
To sink bewildered back on the desire
To which your eyes betrayed it. But I take
Your gaze and answer it, flash with fierce flash
And javelin with ruthless javelin,
Till with the last throe of our struggle pass
This double curse that covers you and me,
Poisons your beauty and defeats my will—
Curse of some sea, whose endless passioning,
Labour of storm and ever-changing stress,
Brings no new thing to birth but bitterness !

Circe :

I am the priestess of enfranchisement :
My body is the altar of a flame
That kindled quenches never : deem not I
Will quench its burning !

Ulysses :

Death, he brings surcease !

Circe :

Nay, for the spirit on whose stedfastness
My wild cup failed, enhancing but his heart,
Not Death himself can ever quench the fire,
But the clear flame forever and for aye
Shall burn in him.

Ulysses :

As now the fire of you
Begins through all the fibre of my flesh
To burn. I touch you, and there leaps in me—
So charged are you with instancy of life—

More than my manhood was ; there wakes in me
Some godhood of immortal potency.

Circe :

But you have cursed me for Death's poppy-flower,
Poisonous, sterile ; shall my womanhood
Dethrone your manhood and set up instead
Some other—call it demon, call it god,
Yet other—and not be your enemy ?

Ulysses :

Let a man battle, resolute to the end
Against his foe, let every proof be tried :
But at the end, defeated, let him choose
Betwixt Death and his foe, and yield him up
To either as to a friend, and sue for peace.

(He offers her his sword.)

Circe :

I take your sword, but you that are a sword
I take exulting !—With the morrow's dawn
Your comrades I will render you—and now—
(She kisses him on the mouth.)

Ulysses :

Was your strange beauty perilous to them
Who only touched the cup with their lips—to me
Who failed not at the cup's rim, but I took
First the wild wine, and now the wilder kiss—
How much more perilous—beyond support—
Unless with this delirious delight,
This myriad-footed, myriad-featured throng
That is become my substance, you indue
With some transcending and tremendous deed
My soul, to keep it single in an act
That knits together all the whirling throng.

Circe :

Then indeed were my boon but bitterness
If holding in my one hand up to you
The grape of the god's ecstasy, I held not
(But hidden still, till all the sweet be shed)
A sword in the other, to demand of you
Divine adventure, dread and uttermost,
For the wild joy's taming.
(*She takes her cup and Ulysses' sword in either hand.*)
Ulysses :

Give me both your hands !
Delight—and the Adventure yet untold !
(*She sets down cup and sword. They embrace : there
is a moaning through all the woods and halls as they
move to the left—going out, hand in hand.*)

CURTAIN.

Act V

The Setting-forth

Early morning. The scene is again in Circe's halls, but in another part. The great doors are wide open on the right: red sunrise light is streaming in. Trestle-tables run between the pillars at the rear, and on the left. These are being set for a feast by the Maidens of Circe. The great loom is seen on the right front, near the door. Enter from the wood, the Piper, haggard and wild.

Piper:

Wine! Wine! Wine! For I perish!

4th Maiden:

You are athirst ere yet the sun is up,
Though all the woods are drenched in the night's rain!

Piper:

I die of thirst! All night I have raved it through
The woods that are a-drip-drip-drip with blood.
Someone was hunting there, for all the leaves
Ran at the lips with massacre! But I
Was caught among the shadows till I had
Fire only in my veins—Give me to drink!
Wine, that is Mother Earth's red blood—Wine! Wine!
—I am a man accurst!

2nd Maiden:

The curse is on him!

The forest fever blazes in his eyes.
Let the lad drink, he is about to perish.
(*He is served with wine.*)

Piper :

My eyes are full of seeing that 'tis ill
To see—eyes, eyes, and eyes under the leaves !
She would not give her cup to my dry lips,
She would not trample on me with her feet :
But yet for me she took the whole great world,
Ensorcelled and en-Circe-ed it, until
Become her body, it encompassed me,
And would not let me go.
Her eyes were watching for me in the wood—
Snakes' eyes, owls' eyes, panthers', ghouls', goblins'
eyes—

Peered never-blinking, peered under the leaves.
I heard hot syllables on icy breaths
Go hissing by me, bodiless, harmful, nigh,
Follow me through the shadows, whispering
Gossip of groves obscure, and cruel sweet
With strange desire. They whispered till I caught
After them whispering. My fingers found
Oozily vanishing bodies. My heart froze,
But flames filled my coagulated blood.
They filled the twitching darkness with their hair,
That flickered, serpent-like, across my face,
With screams of mockery from the wicked trees.
If I ran, they ran fleeter : with a swirl
They thickened the black dark to an eddying flood
That took me off my earth-forgetting feet
Along the void. Naked was I, and cold.
Beneath me leapt the forest like a fire.

My own hands clutched at me : in the lizard-light,
My flesh stared grinning at me like a corpse.
Hideous ages I wandered alone.

4th Maiden :

The night is over and the day, returned,
Brings respite ; and the wine will give you sleep.

Piper :

Let me lie quiet, somewhere, in the cool—
Somewhere that Circe may not follow me.

3rd Maiden :

Take him to the roof-top : a breeze blows
there ;

But of the ladder's narrow path, take heed.

His head is heavy and his feet unsure :

Go with him !

Piper :

Pray Circe, she let me be.

My head, O, my head breaks—have pity on me !

*(He is led out by the 2nd Maiden, on the left. The light
grows brighter as the red dies out of it.)*

4th Maiden :

His part is done : and with his passing fades

The red of sun-rising—that only hangs

A few last drops among the pine needles

And flings a splash upon that naked bough.

Instead, into the amethystine cup

Of this new storm-washed day there flows an amber

Clear, ineffable morning light, outpoured

In draughts of joy for some high-venturing thirst.

3rd Maiden :

Hark ! I can hear new voices coming hither

As though, coming, they sang along their way.

1st Maiden :

No song is it : but multitudinous
Cheer of the morning—like a coppice full
Of dawn-awakened birds.

4th Maiden :

What is it then
Draws hither by the woodway ?

3rd Maiden :

Circe it is :
And at her side Ulysses : after comes
A motley following : the half of them
Sorry fellows as those that yestereve
Shouted their blind way through the wood : but
others
Goodlier far, about Ulysses throng.

4th Maiden :

See yonder, in the rear of them, how one
Comes by himself, reluctant : with, even now,
His sword bare in his hand.

1st Maiden :

And he alone
Joins not with the others when they cry.
(*Sounds of cheering : Voices, " Ulysses ! Ulysses !
Ulysses of the Isles ! "*)

3rd Maiden :

It is the Captain that would not come in.

4th Maiden :

Nor might delay a single one that would,
For all his foolish sword.

3rd Maiden :

I wonder now,
Will he come in or will he watch without !

*(Voices, cheering as before : " Ulysses ! Ulysses !
Ulysses of the Isles ! "*

*Enter Circe, clad in gold, leading in Ulysses. She turns
on the portal, and Ulysses signs for silence to those that
follow.)*

Circe :

They hail you as Ulysses ! But these halls
And we, their mistress, cry another title
Warrant and welcome : Man, the Freedom-Winner !
Man for whose feet the doors of morning opened
And dawn changed what the yesterday had done,
Because he took the darkness for his bride
And quickened her anew. And ye that call you
Companions of Ulysses, Welcome ! He
Who binds your fellowship together—he
Who, finding how our hand had scattered it,
Took then our hand, and bade it gather up
Those its fingers had plucked out of the bunch
And knit the bond again about you all :
He brings you, and with him we welcome you,
We who are promised to achieve his will.

Men on steps, shouting as before :

Ulysses ! Ulysses ! Ulysses of the Isles !

Ulysses :

Comrades.

Men :

Ulysses ! Ulysses !—Silence ! Let us hear him !

Ulysses :

Comrades, and chiefly you, in whom this Queen
With wondrous hands hath wrought a blissful thing
So that ye seem more gladsome to me now
Than ever erst : but also all of you

Whom I deserted, driven, I knew not why
Up hither against my word and counsel—whom
Beside the ship I left, and over you
Many a fear kept watch : Comrades, I bid you
Here on the sill of this most ancient place
Kneel down beside me, and do reverence
Before its Queen. (*They all kneel except Captain.*)
Circe, to Ulysses :

You must not kneel to me.

Ulysses :

Have you not kneeled in your own halls to me ?

Circe :

Nay, for my life I kneeled !

Ulysses :

Now we for ours.

Circe :

You have won them all who won your liberty
And took my peril. Rise ! nay, do not kneel !
Yonder's a man that is of mind with me,
But still he doubts our welcome.

Ulysses :

Cousin, cousin,
Are you the sole among my comrades who
Is not my comrade ?

Captain :

Never can my heart
Consent to honour her ! Still it protests
Her crime of yesterday, and for to-morrow
Like blossom from the black root prophesies.

Circe :

It only needs the sunlight to make sweet
I' the blossom what was bitter in the root :

Yesterday and to-day are far apart
When a deed stands between them—and the morrow
Shall yet stand farther off from yesterday.

Captain :

I will not kneel.

Circe :

And wherefore should you kneel—
You that have never drunk my cup or known
My power, whether to bless you or to curse—?

(Captain enters.)

—Are they all here, that now you may sit down ?

Ulysses, on the left :

My piper is not here—he that should sit
Upon my right—because the gift was his
That brings us to your feast. Where is the lad ?

(The Maidens begin to seat the men duly.)

2nd Maiden :

There was one entered wild-eyed from the woods,
And when he had drunk off three great cups of wine,
Crying “ My head ! my head ! ” went hence to sleep.

Circe :

’Tis better that the lad should sleep his fill,
For little did the long night comfort him
And he hath many a dark league yet to go—
Whereof we must take counsel presently ;
But while you feast, we will awake the song.

Ulysses :

Elpenor’s empty seat reproaches me.

(Circe herself places Ulysses at head of table on left, facing right : she then goes over to her loom by the doors, and the 1st Maiden begins playing on the zither : others serve the tables. Ulysses sits wrapped in thought.)

One of the Men :

Where is the piper ?

Another :

Let the piper go !

Here's peaches, figs and dainties, barley cakes
Smoking upon the board, flagons of mead,
Big mugs for a man's thirst, and toothsome dishes
A-plenty, ay a-plenty even for you,
Hop-o'-my-thumb !

Wine-Carrier :

There's none of them, not one,
But beckons to me slily—" Hop-o'-my-thumb,
'Twas your dear belly I was waiting for ;
You must make room for me ! " Says I, " Dear cates,
What one man may, and he but a little man,
That I'll accomplish ; and if I should lack
Capacity, be not dejected, see
I will commend you to men little worse
Of hunger than am I."

Lieutenant :

Come, then, my hearties !
And break your fast, and presently the oars
Will all pull merrily-o along the way
To yonder little island that we know !

Captain, to Herald :

Hist ! Mark Ulysses ! and remember how
Yesterday in the woods, 'twas I that said
His spirit stoops, down-bent, and laughs no more.
Mark him ; I say, it is all over—man,
We are fooled !

Herald :

And said not I—and now again

I say it—we shall hear Ulysses' laughter
Ring out to-day, leading us forth together !

*(Circe, having prepared her loom, begins rapidly to weave
a new web of magic ; she sings as she moves to and fro,
and many voices from within and without the halls seem
to be blended in that singing.)*

Circe sings :

Old Mother Earth,
Unsatisfied
With her dear children of the wild,
Longed for the birth
Of one free-eyed,
One God-communing child :
Mightily longed, until
In the multitudinous gloom
Of her deep womb
Began
The firstling thrill
Of Man.

Singing, our Mother carried him, and after
Brought forth a thing
Quick with Her joy :
Wherefore forever like Her own good laughter
Echo and ring
The names She gave the boy :—
*Cephisian Alalcomenes—
Idæan, mountain Corybas—
Cabeiros, heir of ecstasies—
Pelagos elder than the moon—
Adam, Oannes, Garamas,
Alcyoneus, Diaulos.*

Earth-born, mischievous wight,
Little impudent brother,
Spoilt, bad Babe of delight,
Earth-dandled,
Unchid you bruised and mishandled
The cherishing breasts of the Mother :
Unchid—for in fist and voice
Puckish eye, Hermes-tassel of you
A-kick on her knees, the old Dam
Smilingly knew
The thing She had missed, free-of-choice,
I-am-that-I-am.

Then out of the woods, shaggy fellow, comes Pan :
From the creatures he brings you a name,
Fills his huge breast to blow it
Thundering out from the twin-pipes, but chorded so it
Issues clear as a flame,
Crying " MAN."
Which name ungainsaid
That the world-piper blew
Laughs forever about you, wild-willer !
A challenge of life ever new,
A might to make-over-again all the Past that is made,
Dream fulfiller !

Born, not bound, of the Earth,
Wayward comrade, we wonder
Whither your feet will go !
Will they seek again down to birth
By some path of desire, plunging under
The Light and below ?
From the shadow-thronged hollow

Whom will you call, and whither, ascending
Out of the dread Abyss ?

—Pipe, for we follow,—

All, Mother-Earth herself and Pan and the stars, attend-
ing

Your feet through the fields of bliss !

(It may now be seen that Circe's weaving shows a seated Figure, dark and dread of aspect, before whom is an exultant youth, piping on a pipe—while comrades follow him, singing and lifting up their hands ; hands and faces, in rough outline, seem to be stretched forward in answer from the gloom behind the Figure.)

Ulysses, dreadingly :

Has the night passed, and passing, changed so little?

Must you still weave your magic webs, and still

Sing strange songs to the weaving of them, Circe ?

My heart is weary : I foresee before me

Parting and a dark, lonely way to tread.

One of the Men :

Though strange it was, the singing told a tale

Of home-coming.

Captain :

As when a corpse comes home

Shall the companions of Ulysses come.

“ Out of the last Abyss,” says she : that's Hades !

Friends, shall this woman cheat us even yet ?

Wine-Carrier :

Go, ask Ulysses ! It's too hard a question

For the likes of me. Let us go up or down

I care not, so I journey with Ulysses.

His wit's enough for me to trust to it.

Lieutenant :

Who would not trust Ulysses now ?

Wine-Carrier :

I'd go to Hades with Ulysses !

(Hereupon a clamour arises, men getting to their feet to cry together.)

Men :

Ulysses, Ulysses ! We'll follow Ulysses !

Though it be down to Hades, we'll follow you, Ulysses !

Captain :

What folly is this, wherewith ye tempt your fate ?

Men :

Ulysses ! Ulysses ! We'll follow Ulysses !

Ulysses :

It may not be, my friends, it may not be !

Men :

Though it be down to Hades, we'll follow you,
Ulysses !

Ulysses :

Circe, speak to my fellows : let them not
Deceive themselves ; meseems that I must go
Alone on this adventure, as alone
I came to drink the cup.—Speak to them, Circe.

Circe :

The way that this man chooses, it may be
Ye would not choose if ye but knew his choice.

Herald, after a pause for conference with the others :

Lady, we are of one choice with Ulysses ;
We know that with him goes our happiness,
And whether we must toil or we must suffer
Let it be he that chooses for us all ;
Else shall we every man wander and go

Innumerable ways ; or we shall run
Together, as yesternight, into some dream
Of folly that seems sweet. But he alone
Sees what we seek, and we will follow him.

Captain :

But not if we must perish, following !

Herald :

Better to die with him who has counsel rather
Than to continue, being bereft of him !

Circe :

Hearken, ye comrades whom Ulysses loves—
These halls are full of voices that ye hear not,
But because yours and theirs assent together
Your cry accomplishes, your choice fulfils.
Gloriously have you chosen the adventure !
The pathway of Ulysses is your pathway.
For he abides not here. Fain were our heart
To keep him, but yet for his errand fainer
Because we know his heart.

Ulysses :

The way ! The way !

Circe :

Your way leads forth across the violet sea,
It crosses the grey ocean to its edge
And downward then it turns, to the Abyss.

Wine-Carrier :

What's this she says, Ulysses ? Does your way
Lead downward ?

Ulysses :

Downward into the Abyss.

(*Silence.*)

Voices, on right :

He promised us but now to take us home !—

But if not home we will remain together
Here in these kindly halls !—We cannot go
Descending that dread way !—We cannot go !
Voices, in centre :

If you go, we go !—We are sworn to go.

A Maiden :

Why should you go away and leave us, when
The forest glades are ample for you all ?

Wine-Carrier :

O Ithaca, where the goats scramble, where
Lizards run in the sunbeam and along
The rocks surges the laughing water !

Lieutenant :

He

Will take us home : hath he not promised us ?

Captain :

Ay, this is what it comes to ! This the first
Fruits of the forest madness, this the faith
Of yon dark woman !

Herald :

It is not the end
That we should doubt her !

Captain :

There's no thoroughfare :
Death ends all ways for mortal feet.

Wine-Carrier :

Ay, but

Circe herself shall go along with us,
And by her spells shall bring us back again !

A Man :

Dread lady, if we must go, go down with us !

Circe :

My place abides.

Ulysses :

Wherefore should I go down

Among the dead ? What wisdom have they there ?

Nay, who of all the dead hath wisdom for

The things of life ? Who there can pilot me

This ocean of contrary circumstance ?

What profits the adventure ? Or what fruit

May ripen on this plant of darkness—this

Horror that grows within the doors of Death ?

Circe :

There shall you win counsel I cannot give

If you blench not before the last dismay,

Neither waste not, for pity of the dead,

Your life-blood on their thirst, nor yet obey

Their thin wild cries that will insistentlly

Bid you on alien errands, to divide

You from your life. For there awaits you one

Who, in those shadowy kingdoms, yet retains

Vision of Earth, because on earth he was

Twix-sexed, man-woman—old Teiresias,

Time's freeman and foreseer. He, across

This billowy world of thwarting circumstance,

Can point the pathway.

(Ulysses gazes heavily before him.)

Captain :

Nay, he cannot ! See !

His head swims at the ledge of the precipice !

He dare not set his eyes into the gulf !

1st Maiden :

Do you not know your strength ? It was not thus

You fronted her ! You spake not thus to her,
The pitiless ! Is she less dread than Death ?

Captain, mockingly :

She is not drear as he ! The body shrinks,
Gibbers, and will not.

2nd Maiden :

The indomitable will !

3rd Maiden :

The laughter of your heart !

4th Maiden :

Look up, Ulysses !

Captain :

Numbs at his icy breath : turns toward the sun—
Refuses !

Ulysses :

And is this the Adventure ; this
The deed you promised me ? O, this is not
To die, as a man needs must—but to go down
Alive into that fleshless place—to walk
Among those shadows, shadowy, returning,
But thenceforth as a stranger, to my flesh !

*(Ulysses sitting speechless, the men watch him, hardly
daring even to whisper among themselves. The Maidens
gather about the doorway. Moly appears upon the
threshold eagerly peering into the hall.)*

Moly :

Must I go in and seek my playfellow
Among those heavy brows ?—He is not there—
Elsewhere he must be waiting.

4th Maiden :

Whom seek you,
And who are you, sea-stranger ?

Moly :

Stay me not !

(She goes quickly.)

Herald :

Lead us, Ulysses : we will go with you.

Lieutenant :

Who are we to desert you now !

Wine-Carrier :

Elpenor—

Come, let us call the piper ! He shall lead us
Forth with a tune together. Ho ! Elpenor !

A Voice without :

Ulysses, I will go with you !

Man next the door :

'Tis he !

That was the voice of the piper, answering !

The Voice :

Alas, Ulysses, Ai ! *(A scream and thud of falling.)*

Maiden :

He has fallen down !

(Silence : a sound of merry laughter fading away.)

Ulysses, springing to the door :

I come, comrade !

Ulysses will not fail you !

Captain :

Nay, Death foreruns you : we be all dead men !

(As Ulysses is about to go out he is met by the Witch entering.)

Witch :

Ay, ay ! Now ye are hot and gallant, but stay,
hark'ee !

Ay, ye shall have my tale : ay, hark'ee !

(She comes to the left front, turns, and crouches there.)

As I was a-spinning my fancies under the wall,

and you dilly-singing within here, up on the roof I spies one, tugged from his slumber by the singing, and stumbling at the tiles : he comes to the roof-rim, boggles at it—dives !—ha-ha—

Thinks I—a good corpse ready-made—and scrambles to my legs to look at it—ay, and to carry it I know where, and put it to fine use, a prime young carcase ! Ha-ha-ha !

I was not slow, but a little young slip of a wench, no more than a butterfly, laughter and sea-wrack—whisks away something too big for her arms—“ Mine, mine ! ”—I can hear the wench over it, off down the sea-way.

Nothing she left for any to gather of it—cheated me of a body that does not come in these parts every day. Ha-ha-ha !

Ulysses :

Where did she carry him ?

Witch :

Go and ask Hades—Ha ! Go and ask Hades—Ha-ha-ha !

(She goes out, left ; the men shrink together in horror, whispering.)

Captain :

Hence ! Hence with me ! ye comrades of Ulysses !
'Tis he, not you, must follow, you, not he,
Must lead ! For 'tis no longer him you follow,
But this dead piper's drunken feet, till all
Pressing behind upon Ulysses, sink him
So much the deeper into Hades ! Nay,
But you shall see the cunning of the witch,
For can your king desert a comrade ? No !

The Setting-forth

101

Wherefore she makes the fool cry to Ulysses
Perishing. Or will ye desert Ulysses ?
No—no !

Men :

We will not !

Captain :

Ye have sworn ye will not !
So shall ye all go down into perdition !
And I will tell you more ! Fools that ye be,
And fools about to perish—for these halls
Are the gate-house of Hades : Portress she :
Elpenor is passed in—being most green
He goeth first : but this most headstrong man,
My cousin, next, and ye go after him !

Herald :

And who is this that we should follow him ?
We will go with Ulysses, where he goes.
But he shall stay with Circe : he shall keep
Watch at the gate against we come again !
(*The Wine-Carrier laughs boisterously.*)

Ulysses :

Against we come again ! But if he would not
No man shall go on this adventure.—Cousin,
Struggle no more to set your fears against
My faith or theirs ! To-day the lot is mine :
They follow me, to-day ; and in my heart
Echoes the laughter of the Moly-maiden
Carrying down the pathways we must tread,
Mixed with the piping of the lad of dreams.
Now will I take her laughter, take the sound
Of piping that across the island rings
Clear as the morning light after the storm,

Forget this man's vain prudence, fear forget,
And go on Circe's errand.—For you, Circe,
Have offered me the prize that is alone
Worth winning, to go down with all my band,
Into the dark, and looking in Death's eyes
Know freedom and possess it—As for him,
His pipe goes on before us, through the dark
Blowing blithe venturings ! You sent him on
That we might follow, carrying sunshine down
With us to him. Ha ! to beard Hades !—Ha !
Go down to his dread halls and make them ring !
Till all the dead, out of their stillness, wake,
And he himself, Dread Terror, shall almost
Unbend his brow amid our echoing,
Our many-throated laughter !

Circe :

I am leagued
With Death. None ever loved me but he must
Take Death with his delight, either to die
Out of his flesh, and leave it masterless,
Himself but a bright shadow in my hands—
Or, by the succour of some Mighty One
Strengthened, so to transform my magic taken
Into his frame, that in his blood it may
Defy even the shadowy touch of Death,
Win franchise of his mystery-peopled place,
Breathe lightly that insidious air, commune
With both the Past and Future.—And to him
That I have chosen, Death is not the end
And finish : but, out of that vasty gulf
As out of lustral waters rising clean,
Or as the dawn out of the holy dark,

He shall return : to weary not with time,
Nor be the thrall of pleasure or of dread
Henceforward. Now free-hearted, he shall take
Life in his dauntless hands and fashion it
According to the vision in his will.

(She embraces him before them all.)

Ulysses :

Now out of your embraces are my flesh
And soul and spirit wrought together anew,
And quick with might as never in my youth !
Wherefore upon this morrow of my wonder
Ere yet its brightness may be overcast,
I will descend into that acid air
So potent to dissolve and separate
Man's hardly gathered manhood, rendering it
Back to the jealous elements—I will go
Down into Hades, now while I am strong !

Circe :

And now, while I am glad, I bid you go !
Your purpose plenished with our bridal fare,
Your eye clear, your heart single, your spirit
Master of all this splendid multitude
Gathered anew into the company
Of its being !

Herald :

Who will follow with Ulysses ?
Who with him discover Freedom ?

All the Men :

We !

We follow with Ulysses ! We go down
Into the depths untrod, beside Ulysses,
Seeking for Freedom.

Ulysses :

But you, cousin—

Captain :

Nay,

I will not stop alone upon the isle.

Ulysses :

Lead forward then, Polites ! And farewell,
Dread wonder of the beauty of the world
Become my comrade ! Till I come again—
Farewell !

Circe :

Farewell ! Stray not apart ! For now I open
The doors of Death before you, and you go
To find the secret hidden in Earth's heart.

*(To a sound of piping they move forward, and pass
out upon the right : as they go, there enters on the left
and from the front the throng of the forest : these group
themselves about Circe, upon whom a red light falls.)*

Circe :

They come—and go—and come, with wind and tide :
Change us, and we are changed, and yet abide.

CURTAIN.

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